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High hopes for improvement following the new religion legislation led the U.S. Department of State to take Vietnam off its blacklist of the worst violators of religious freedom in late 2006, which enabled the U.S. government to endorse Vietnam's accession to the World Trade Organization. And Christian support organization Open Doors this year dropped Vietnam to No. 23 on its World Watch List ranking of religion persecutors. In eight of the last 12 years, Vietnam had been placed among the organization's top 10 worst religious persecutors.

The **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)**, however, found exceptions to progress so widespread that it again recommended naming Vietnam a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) this year. The recommendation by USCIRF, responsible for monitoring state department compliance with the U.S. 1998 Law on International Religious Freedom, was announced on May 1.

**The commission's** report recognizes progress but notes, "There continue to be far too many serious abuses and restrictions of religious freedom in the country. Individuals continue to be imprisoned or detained for reasons related to their religious activity or religious freedom advocacy; police and government officials are not held fully accountable for abuses; independent religious activity remains illegal; and legal protections for government-approved religious organizations are both vague and subject to arbitrary or discriminatory interpretations based on political factors."